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ABSTRACT

It is in the nature of the development of the self that it becomes possible to maintain continuity in development while providing the basis for change. Language forms the self by making it possible for a user of language to relate himself as agent to others and to the culture. The formation of self depends powerfully on the meanings that a human being shares with others. Joint reference achieves a kind of union or solidarity. Language, used in a certain way, constitutes shared, public realities of its own. Such realities are one of the means whereby, once words are uttered, the silent self becomes the transactional self. The sincerity conditions of speech acts, properly managed, provide an extraordinary scaffold for the construction of self, for in meeting those conditions, decisions about silence, indirection, manipulativeness, and the like are made. Learning how to use language involves both learning the culture and learning how to take stances that are "personal." In acquiring language one becomes a member of the culture and one becomes one's own self. In the light of the foregoing, classic views about the nature of early endowment and the direction of growth need re-examination: they are considered under the headings of egocentrism, the private self, unmediated conceptualism, and tripartitism, or the analytic separation of human functions, such as perception, feeling, thinking, and action, which through cultural means are kept related and become fused into self-directing patterns--ways of being a self. (RH)

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"Development of a Transactional Self"

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I. Introduction

A. Object of the exercise.

I have spent the last decade studying the manner in which kids acquire the uses of language and, before that, studying the early cognitive development of infants and young children. The experience and the results lead me to the conviction that our account of development is lacking in one crucial dimension, "our" meaning the usual general version of development. I think we have been getting it very wrong about the nature of the "executive routines" or "programs" by which growth is shaped and steered. I shall call this general class of processes by its usual commonsense term, Self, and I add to the old term the word transactional in order to underline the central point at issue in my own thinking -- viz., the Self is a body of procedures in terms of which we regulate our relations with others and with the nature of the culture in which we operate from the very start. When I say "procedures" I do not wish to avoid the problem of self-consciousness or of self-reflection and self-repair -- turning around on one's own procedures and putting them in more adequate order. I shall come to that issue later.

In order to make abundantly clear what I have in mind, let me begin with an account of the conventional view that I wish to dissociate myself from. (I would also, before starting, like to acknowledge two intellectual debts. One is to a gifted young anthropologist, Michelle Rosaldo, whose efforts to develop an anthropologically adequate theory of Self, helped inspire my efforts. She was killed two years ago in a landslide in the Philippines while studying the Ilongot people there, but left a seminal book and several papers that have inspired some of the points I want to make in the course of my remarks. The other debt is to a young Oxford

philosopher, Gareth Evans, who also died in his thirties, also very recently, who approached the problem from the point of view of the linguistic theory of reference and reached some startling conclusions about the operation of Self that are congruent with Rosaldo's and that have also influenced what I want to recount.)

B. Some conventional shibboleths about Self that I shall present with a view to rejecting them later. But I shall try to present them fairly.

1. Egocentrism. That initially, young human beings are egocentric, incapable of taking the perspective of others, have no conception of Other Minds, and must be brought to sociality or allocentrism through development and learning. In its baldest form, it is the doctrine of initial autism that even held the view that the first perceptions of the child were little more than hallucinatory wish fulfillments. It is a view inspired principally, I think, by the doctrine of original sin.

2. Privacy. That there is some inherently individual, biological Self that develops and that is given in the universal nature of the human mind, that is itself universal and beyond culture. It is a matter that is caught in such distinctions as Self vs. Persona (the presentation of Self), Guilt vs. Shame, Deception vs. Disclosure, etc. It emphasizes a kind of ineffable individuality and puts the locus of central control of the person there.

3. Unmediated conceptualism. That the child's growing knowledge of the world is achieved principally by direct encounters with that world rather than mediated through vicarious encounters with it in interacting and negotiating with others. In this regard Piaget, stimulus-response learning theory, and information-processing theory all occupy a common bed. It is the doctrine of the solo child.

4. Tripartism. That cognition, affect, and action can be usefully separated -- that they stem from different origins and are often in conflict that needs regulation through socialization.

5. Promissory note. I want to show that all of these premises are not so much "wrong" as arbitrary and that their acceptance prevents the development of a workable idea of the Self. To give you a taste of my argument, let me propose, for example, that the distinction between "private self" and "public self" is a function of the culture's conventions about when one talks and negotiates the meanings of events and when one keeps silent, and upon the values placed upon and the ontological status given to that which is kept silent and that which is made public. Cultures and subcultures differ in this latter regard, and so even do different family constellations.

II. Relation of my theme to "stability and change"

Bonnie Litowitz told me to concentrate on sources of stability and change within development -- a good year ago. The binary opposition of genetics as providing stability and environment as producing change was the shiboleth that she hoped we would all attack. Gladly. For I would like to argue that it is in the nature of the development of Self that it becomes possible to maintain continuity in development while providing the basis for change.

Indeed, Self is a process that makes possible the assimilation of change by making it assimilable to a canonical "story line" -- what I shall later refer to as "syntagmatic continuity." You will recognize it in such maxims as the French, Plus ca change, plus la meme chose. But more of such "stories" later.

III. Self from the vantage point of language

A. Three accomplishments of language.

1. Order and syntax. We need not pause long here. The main point that needs making is that the possession of (or the acquisition of) language gives us rules and a criterion by which we can generate well-formed utterances -- whether they reflect the structure of an organ of mind in general or of some organ of language as such, or whether there are aspects of learning involved. That is not our concern. The point, rather, is that grammar permits us to use a highly abstract system for accomplishing communicative functions that are crucial for regulating joint attention and joint action, for creating topics and commenting upon them in a fashion that segments "reality," for forefronting and imposing perspectives on events, for indicating our stance toward the world to which we refer and toward our interlocutors, for treating and marking presuppositions, for marking the temporal structure of events through aspect and of time through tense, and doing myriad other things that make it possible for a user of language to relate himself as agent to others in the world around him and to the culture. For what I have to say, the orgins of syntax can be left unexplored, save to note that whatever the orgins, the

resulting system vibrates with potential usefulness not simply for representing the world, but for getting things done in that world. It is also a system that is extraordinarily sensitive to shaping by cultural context, as we shall see in a moment.

2. Reference, sense, and constitutiveness. Language has the property of referring, and it does so by an extraordinary use of context. It refers to objects, events, and far more abstract entities in a manner which is traditionally referred to as deictic. Deixis is dependence upon a constructed and presupposed context that two speakers must share if they are to succeed in communicating -- like the classic shifters I and You, with me using the first when referring to myself and the second when referring to you but appreciating that you shift to I when you refer to you and You when you refer to me. It is to the credit of Gareth Evans that he recognized the profound extent to which referring involves the mapping of egocentric spheres on each other, and how complex the procedures are for doing so. He reminds us, for example, of the interesting anomaly that a failed effort to refer is not just a failure, but rather that it is an offer, a promissory note about an intent, an invitation to search possible contexts, etc. As such, referring to something requires even at the simplest some form of negotiation or some hermeneutic process. If it were not so, reference to merely possible events would be so difficult as to fail often. Referring to something singles out a locus to be explored in a certain way. Achieving joint reference is achieving a kind of union or solidarity with somebody.

   Sense -- it was Frege who made us first aware of the separability of sense and reference -- has to do with the relation of words or

expressions to other words or expressions or representation of the world. Sense and reference together constitute meaning. And there is the rub. What shall we take as meaning? The stipulative formal meanings of the dictionary? Not really, for there are meanings that grow out of particular settings and occasions. "That's a pretty weak excuse," we say, and the utterance requires a deep construal to dig out its occasion meaning (in contrast to its timeless meaning, if there ever is such a thing as a truly timeless meaning). Dictionary meanings are public in a static sense -- public but non-negotiable. Occasion meanings are made public and conventional in concrete cultural contexts. They help form Self, as I shall try to show in a moment. So we may say, given the negotiability to meaning and reference, that the formation of Self depends powerfully on the meanings that a human being shares with others of many stripes, first in time among which will be his family of origin, of course.

Constitutiveness concerns the capacity of language, used in a certain way, to create realities of its own. I am not referring to the Whorfian claim that language shapes concepts about the world -- which it doubtless does in varyingly subtle ways. Rather, I am referring to the power of language to create social realities altogether -- one conspicious case being what John Austin two decades ago called commissives, as when I say, "I promise that X" and create a reality of such density that failure to conform to it may lead me in something as realistically substantial as a jail. We create realities by warning, by encouraging, by dubbing with titles, by conferring degrees, by offering explanations, etc. Constitutive realities are shared. They become public. They are one of the means

whereby, once we speak, we turn Silent Self into Transactional Self. I shall come back to this matter later in more detail.

3. Pragmatic functionally. Human utterances must not only be well formed, refer, make sense, and constitute or stipulate, but they must do so in such a way as to bring off results in the world of interaction. I have been at pains thus far to make it clear how the syntactic and semantic processes of language use help further this end. But now I must say a few things about the pragmatics of language in a more direct way. The central concept to which I want to make reference here is the speech act which, I am sure, is familiar to most of you. A speech act, in brief, is a means of making one's intentions clear and conventional by the use of language.

   Any utterance consists of a locution whose surface structure needs to be construed not simply for what it says but for what the speaker intends. The classic and by now boring standard example is the utterance, "Would you be so kind as to pass the salt," which at the surface is a request for information about an interlocuter's limits of compassion. Only a linguistic idiot would interpret it in that way -- an idiot who understood only syntax and semantics. In addition, one needs to be able to penetrate to the illocutionary or performative force of the utterance. To use the current jargon, getting to the intent of the utterance is "uptake." Intentions can include a wide, wide variety of things: indicating, requesting, promising, encouraging, threatening, etc.

   Knowing how to make one's intentions clear and conventional (and knowing how to interpret the language-encoded intentions of others) requires a sense of the appropriateness of language use in different

kinds of situations. Such knowledge is usually described as knowing the felicity conditions for making utterances. There are usually three such conditions stated, to which I shall add a fourth.

Preparatory conditions. If you are going to request or threaten or whatever, you prepare the ground to fulfill a proper reasonableness. "I've had enough of your discourtesy. Once more and I'll punch you in the nose." Or, "I've never seen anything like it. Look at that."

Essential conditions. If you are going to request, for example, you should be without that which is requested. If you are going to promise, you should have the wherewithal to deliver. If you think these conditions are easily grasped by children coming into the linguistic culture, I recommend my forthcoming book (Child's Talk) where you will find abundant instances to the contrary.

Sincerity conditions. If you request something, you must really want it; if you promise, you must intend to fulfill. To deliberately transgress sincerity conditions is to be a con man, a fraud, a manipulator, a practical joker. To lie or to dissimulate with intent to deceive is distinctly human and its forms are carefully graded from hype and used-car salesmanship to downright criminal fraud. Sincerity conditions, properly managed, provide an extraordinary scaffold for the construction of Self. For here is the place where decisions about silence, indirection, manipulativeness, and the like are made.

Affiliative conditions. In forming our locutions in a manner to carry illocutionary force, we must take into account the social relationship that exists between us and our interlocutor -- hence the "would-you-be-so-kind" form, honoring the voluntary status of a requestee. In the

very act of speaking, then, we relate ourselves to the world of others and to the culture that we share with them.

B. Culture and language.

You will readily appreciate, then, that learning how to use language involves both learning the culture and learning how to take stances that are "personal." You become a member of the culture and you become you own Self. I want to say a word about each of these.

1. Learning the "culture."

As you no doubt know, there has been a profound revolution in the last decade in the definition of human culture. It takes the form of a move away from the strict structuralism that held that culture was a set of interconnected rules from which one derived particular behaviors, to the idea of culture as implicit and only semi-connected knowledge of the world from which, through negotiation, we arrive at satisfactory ways of acting in given contexts. The anthropologist Clifford Geertz likens the process to interpreting an ambiguous text. Let me quote a paragraph from the last paper written by Michelle Rosaldo that puts it exceptionally well:

> In anthropology, I would suggest, the key development ... is a view of culture probably best articulated in the works of Clifford Geertz, wherein meaning is proclaimed a public fact -- or better yet, where culture and meaning are described as processes of interpretive apprehension by individuals of symbolic models. These models are both 'of' the world in which we live and 'for' the organization of activities, responses, perceptions and experiences by the conscious self. For present purposes, what is important here is first of all the claim that meaning is a fact of public life, and secondly, that cultural patterns -- social facts -- provide the template for all human action, growth and

> understanding. Culture so construed is, furthermore, a matter less of artifacts and propositions, rules, schematic programs, or beliefs, than of associative chains and images that tell what can be reasonably linked up with what; we come to know it through collective stories that suggest the nature of coherence, probability and sense within the actor's world. Culture is, then, always richer than the traits recorded in the ethnographer's accounts (In Press).

It goes without saying almost, that the process of establishing occasion meanings and of making known our intentions by conventional means so as to meet felicity conditions -- that both of these are typically "cultural" as well as linguistic. How we decide to enter into transactions with others linguistically and by other exchanges, how much we wish to do so (in contrast to remaining "detached" or "silent" or otherwise "private") will shape the sense of Self that we form. As Rosaldo reminds us (using her Ilongot people as contrast) our Western concern with "individuals and with their inner hidden selves may well be feature of our world of action and belief -- itself to be explained and not assumed as the foundation of cross-cultural study." Indeed, the image that we provide for guidance to speakers with respect to when they may speak and what they may say in what situations may indeed be a first constraining definition of what constitutes "public Person" and what constitutes "private Self."

Let me illustrate with an old story about the philosopher Morris Raphael Cohen who, one day, encountered a patently disturbed student outside his door looking for the Psychological Clinic and, upon asking him what was wrong, was told by the student that he was full of doubts about who he was. "Who am I?" the young man asked plaintively. Cohen is reputed to have replied, "And who's asking the question?".

2. Reevaluating presuppositions about growth.

In light of the foregoing, we need to examine those classic chestnuts about the nature of early endowment and of the directions of growth. Let me use the same headings as I did before in describing them.

a. Egocentrism. I lost faith in the organizing power of the idea when Michael Scaife and I discovered that by the last quarter of the first year of life, normal children habitually followed another's line of regard to see what they were looking at. There must, moreover, be some insight into the nature of other minds, for when the child can find no target out along the line of regard, he turns back to the looker to check the gaze direction again. Or, to put it in Katherine Nelson's terms, when the child understands the event structure and the scenario is familiar, he is not that different from an adult. He simply does not have as grand a collection of scripts and scenarios and event schemas as adults do. Moreover, the child's mastery of linguistic deictic shifters suggests that egocentrism is not the problem. When the child fails to grasp the structure of events, then he adopts an egocentric framework. It is, as we say in linguistics, not a competence problem but a performance failing.

b. Privacy. As we have seen, the notion of the "private" or reserved Self free of cultural definition is part of the stance inherent in Western man's conception of himself. The nature of the "untold" and the "untellable" and our attitudes toward it is deeply cultural in character. Private impulses are defined as such by the culture. Obviously, the shift of meaning from hidden to overtly told makes a great difference to our personal dynamics, else there would not be such heavy emphasis upon either psychoanalysis or Catholic confession in our culture. At

least one critic, Foucault, has already made this point about the centrality of confession in our great literature. It constitutes entry into negotiation.

c. Unmediated conceptualism. In the main, we do not construct a reality on the basis of private encounters with exemplars of natural states. Most of our approach to the world is mediated through negotiation with others. It is this truth that gives such extraordinary force to Vygotsky's theory of the Zone of Proximal Development in which growth is assumed to occur, so to speak, by the child being bootstrapped by a loan of adult consciousness on which he can climb to higher ground. We know far too little about learning from vicarious experience, from interaction, from media, even from tutors. It involves the kind of transaction that is central to selfhood: Who, so to speak, helped us across the Zone of Proximal Development? Who lent us their consciousness until we were able to develop our own -- and made us sensitive to their style as well as their contents?

d. Tripartism. In psychology (perhaps beginning with Aristotle) we have insisted in abstracting cognition, affect, and action (i.e., motivated behavior). I hope that the account that I have tried to set forth both concerning the acquisition of language and the acquisition of culture underlines the poverty that results from making that distinction too firm and fixed. That superb psychologist, David Krech, used to urge that people "perfink" -- perceive, feel, and think at once. I would not want to add to this and say he had it almost to "perfinktion" and all that was needed was action. We can abstract each of these functions from the unified whole, but if we do so too rigidly we lose sight of the fact that it is one of the functions of a culture to keep them related and

together in those images, stories, and the like by which our experience is given coherence and cultural relevance. The scripts and stories and "loose associative chains" that Michelle Rosaldo spoke of are models ("templates" she liked to call them) for canonical ways of fusing the three into self-directing patterns -- ways of being a Self.

IV. Some very minimal conclusions.

A. As a starter, I think the process of self-formation along the lines I have outlined is a crucial form of individual stability, but it is a stability that is premised on the stability of a larger scale unit -- the culture. It will always be difficult to change any human being's sense of Self without somehow moving him from the support and constraint system in which he operates and with which he negotiates.

B. The power of healing ceremonies, talking therapies, encounter groups, and all other such joint systems is that they provide an opportunity for "turning around on oneself" and recognizing better the nature of the constraints that operate and, by negotiation, to test other ways of interpreting one's acts and one's communications. Emphasis on metacognition, everywhere so evident in psychology today, probably spells the beginnings of a culture change in the direction of a better appreciation of how Self is formed and maintained -- and how changed through Self-awareness.

C. Meaning, as Geertz insists, is public and when rendered so by negotiation, its effect is powerful in the sense of creating an existence therein about a way of being. The idea of a Transactional Self is essentially a means of underlining the importance of cultivating negotiation as a medium of reformulating Self and reexamining the cultural constraints that make it.

D. Looked at from the perspective of communication, one can conclude by saying that it is not altogether false that we are some combination of what we say and what we choose to keep silent, each informing the other. This gives the canons of language use, pragmatics, an enormously powerful role in the forming of personality. And having said that I fall silent.

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